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ABSTRACT

Although the literature proclaims the need for school district and university cooperation, there are few analyses of existing partnership projects or examinations of factors facilitating or impeding successful school-university linkages and cooperation. This paper focuses on the central Florida school districts' partnership with the University of Central Florida (UCF) in an area experiencing a tremendous population explosion in recent years. The area includes Orange, Seminole, Brevard, and Lake Counties, and boasts 170,000 elementary and secondary school students and over 20,000 college students at five UCF campuses. One partnership component is a doctoral assistantship program, in which two junior level school administrators are released from current assignments for a 2-year program of study supported by the school district and the UCF College of Education. Other linkages include cooperative research efforts; student internships and adjunct faculty programs, minority teacher recruitment, a professional development institute, and a principal scholars institute. A successful school district-university partnership must recognize the possible areas and functions appropriate for collaboration and the support systems needed for an ongoing linkage. In the central Florida system, each party is both a stakeholder and a benefactor. The real winners will be the students. (Five references) (MLH)

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COLLABORATION IS NOT MEETING WITH THE ENEMY: AN ANALYSIS OF A SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL DISTRICT RELATIONSHIPS

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Introduction

Working with the enemy in war time is labeled "collaboration." Too often, College of Education and school district relationships resemble a battlefield between "town and gown". The purpose of this paper is to identify the relationships developed and the significant programs that have resulted from a positive joint venture with one university and its surrounding school districts.

As schools seek programs and systems of continuing change and improvement, the importance of linking organizations which can contribute to these efforts becomes critical. Indeed, such partnerships between schools and other public organizations including, but not limited to, the university can contribute to the overall success or failure of school improvement activities. An important linkage and the concern of this paper, is the relationship between the school or school district and the local university. As Lipham (1977) wrote over a decade ago, "there is no doubt but that the most powerful relationship for improving education is that which exists between colleges and universities and local schools" (p. 36). Goodlad (1985) supports this belief when he stated, "It is becoming increasingly clear that if we are going to have good schools, we are going to have collaboration..." (p. 6). Although much has been written about school district and university cooperative efforts since that time, few notable demonstration projects exist. While the

literature is replete with exhortations regarding the need for university-community school relations, little is offered regarding analysis of an operational partnership project or an examination of factors which may facilitate or impede successful school-university linkages and collaboration.

Discussion of collaboration systems leads to two immediate questions: In what areas are cooperative efforts likely to be productive?" and "What support systems within the respective organizations are required to maintain the linkage?" A discussion of these questions can serve to facilitate both existing and contemplated efforts. The improvement of linkage relationships requires consideration of functions performed, the support needed, and the agencies providing the services.

The principal focus of this paper is the school districts of central Florida and the University of Central Florida partnership to promote school and university commitment to excellence. Included in the review of this partnership are discussions of the various components and how they have contributed to improvements in both institutions.

The school districts of central Florida are experiencing a tremendous population explosion in recent years. The impact of both tourism and many high technology and military-related industries has contributed to an unprecedented population increase.

The Orange County (Orlando, FL) school district is the 23rd largest in the nation with over 90,000 students and 6,000

teachers in over 120 schools. Seminole County borders the University of Central Florida and has 45,000 students in over 40 schools. Brevard County, the space center community, has over 60,000 students in 60 schools as does Volusia County with approximately the same number. Finally, Lake County with 40 schools has 25,000 students and Osceola next to Disney World, has 10,000 students in 20 schools. This district has doubled in size in the past 10 years.

The university has experienced a similar growth. Although UCF is only 25 years old, it is one of the fastest growing institutions of higher education in the country. UCF presently has over 20,000 students in five colleges with a teaching and research faculty of over 650 members. The main campus is located 13 miles east of downtown Orlando with area campuses in Daytona Beach, Cocoa and south Orlando. Growth is limited only by Board of Regents' policy and resources provided by the Florida Legislature.

Graduate Assistantship Program

One of the key elements in a recognized and respected doctoral program is a cadre of graduate students in full-time residency. Regrettably, because of economic factors, the number of persons pursuing doctoral studies as full-time students has diminished in recent years. This is unfortunate, because unless one can immerse himself/herself in study and research, the total value of a terminal degree cannot be realized. This decline in full-time doctoral students also comes at a time when scholarship

and talent are so desperately needed by our nation's schools. It is toward this support of a program of study that includes a cadre of full-time doctoral students that one component of the Orange County-UCF partnership is directed. Similar arrangements are currently planned with other districts.

Two persons who currently hold junior-level administrative appointments in the school district (e.g., assistant principals) have been identified by the district and university for participation and are released from their current assignments for two years to permit full-time doctoral study. Financial support is provided by the school district and the College of Education at the same level as their administrative appointments, including fringe benefits. Internship responsibilities are divided between the district and university. District assignments permit participants to become involved in areas related to district policy and decision making. University assignments are structured to permit interaction with faculty, the design and analysis of research, teaching university courses, supervision and evaluation of teacher interns, and project/proposal development.

The doctoral assistantship program offers benefits to all parties involved. The school district has the opportunity to select persons who have the potential to be outstanding educational leaders and provide them with the best opportunities to grow professionally. The students, of course, have the opportunity to engage in full-time graduate study as opposed to

being restricted to summer or evening studies. The doctoral interns have been valuable contributors to both their districts and the university. Benefits which have, and will continue to accrue to the district and university, will be worth many times the investment. As Goodlad (1985) so cogently stated, " If we are to forge the kind of profession that we want, and if we are going to forge the kind of preparation programs that we need for principals and other administrators, there must be the closest possible collaboration between the university and the schools" (p.7).

Cooperative Research Efforts

Collaborative research efforts between the university and districts are encouraged and have contributed to the success of a number of research efforts. Possible research programs are identified and included on the Orange County Comprehensive Plan for Program Evaluation. UCF students who wish to gather practical research experience may work with a district program evaluator in conducting a project. A student can conduct literature reviews, interviews and observations, analyze data, or generate preliminary reports for the program evaluator. In order to stimulate student interest in specific research topics, the district Testing and Program Evaluation office has prepared and presented an agenda of district research topics for the university. Periodic meetings are held with faculty, staff and student representatives of the institutions to maintain an ongoing dialogue regarding cooperative research programs.

An example of these efforts is the work recently completed by several advanced graduate students related to middle school transition efforts by a school district. The research has proven to be quite valuable in assessing the quality of the program. Often, the district does not have the personnel required for effective program evaluation. This area will be an increasing focus with a number of school districts.

Another cooperative effort in this area is the service offered by the University Educational Leadership faculty in conjunction with the Management Training Institute, a consortium for the east central Florida school districts. The Institute coordinates management training for newly appointed school leaders. The University faculty has served as consultants, trainers and trainees with this office to assist them as well as providing the opportunity for professors to learn new skills and information. Together, the two groups have provided a summer Principal's Scholars Institute which provided four days of training for over 90 principals last year.

It should also be highlighted here that through a "Teacher Education Center" state staff development grant, UCF faculty provide training for educational personnel. Last year (1988-89), over 500 days of training were provided school districts by 50 UCF faculty members.

Student Internship and Adjunct Faculty Programs

An internship review and task force committee composed of district and UCF members was formed in 1987. Principal concerns

of this committee were the quality of university internship coordinators and supervising teachers, specification of clear goals for the internship experience as part of the total teacher preparation program, and the evaluation of the internship program. The task force on student internships has already contributed significantly to the modification of the UCF internship program and expectations for both university-based coordinators and supervisors have been established. The clinical classroom model was adopted, based on research, experience and district policies. Additionally, the system provides for exchange of professional personnel between the two institutions. Experienced teacher intern supervisors have been able to meet with teacher education majors in selected classes and relate current course offerings to actual classroom performance.

Professional development centers for tutorial assistance and student teaching have been a part of the UCF program since its inception in the late 1960's. These efforts have been heightened in recent years and plans are to enhance the cluster concept even further.

Selected OCPS personnel have been identified as key adjunct faculty to compliment current College of Education faculty. For example, in one regularly scheduled doctoral core course, the local district negotiator serves as an adjunct instructor, co-teaching a class related to contracts and personnel functions, with a senior college faculty member. In another, a high school principal is teamed with a professor in a doctoral leadership

class. The different perspectives, expertise and dialogue between the faculty provide a unique learning environment. Student and faculty feedback and evaluation of these adjunct faculty members have been very favorable.

Beginning in 1989, selected members of the Orange County program evaluation office will serve as resource members of UCF doctoral dissertation committees. While graduate studies policy prohibits these individuals from serving as voting committee members, their expertise is expected to significantly enhance this component of the graduate program.

Minority Teacher Recruitment

Based on statistical projects in the United States for 1990, black students will make up 30% of the student population, while black teachers will make up 5% or less of the teaching force (Miller, 1987). Compared to current statistics, these projections revealed a decrease in the number of minority teachers in the nation.

The number of minority teachers in the state of Florida is decreasing. Statistics indicate that the state's teacher pool is becoming increasingly white, while demographic shifts continue to boost the number of minority students in the schools (Miller, 1987). The lack of minority teachers in the classroom will result in the students having minimal exposure to minority role models, thus limiting their opportunities to receive a culturally diverse and equitable education.

Over the past five years, the minority student population in Orange County has grown from 14 to 24.5% while the percentage of minority teachers has remained fairly constant (17%). Demographic projections indicate that the district's minority enrollment will exceed 40% by the year 2000. The other surrounding districts have similar situations. Other counties have had a significant Hispanic increase. One school in Osceola County progressed from 2% Hispanic to 45% in the space of four years.

Therefore, the need for assistance is evident. With the realization that current methods of recruitment and out-of-date approaches to the problem were not producing the desired results, alternative methods needed to be created, examined and implemented.

The Orange County Public Schools and the College of Education agreed to form a task force whose mission was to cast and launch a course of action that resolved this problem utilizing OCPS, UCF and Valencia Community College (VCC) resources. Task force representatives would work toward one goal, to ensure that minority teacher recruitment and retainment kept pace with the district's growing minority student population. Utilizing every available resource, the task force placed in operation a model program designed to recruit, train, certify and employ minority teachers in Orange County and central Florida. Listed below are some major accomplishments:

1. Established a complementary set of short and long-term recruitment, training and employment goals.
2. Generated operational objectives for the next five years.
3. Identified and analyzed potential recruiting and training elements already in OCPS, VCC, UCF and their communities.
4. Identified at least four untapped major groups for recruiting and training potential minority teachers.
5. Initiated local, statewide and regional recruitment activities.

With the development of a model plan to effectively recruit, train, certify and employ competent minority teachers, the Florida Department of Education awarded the task force a $60,000 grant to make implementation of the program possible.

Task force representatives' future expectations are to realize an increase in minority teacher employment, a greater number of minority undergraduates in education programs, more minority education graduate students, equity between the minority student population and minority teaching staff and to develop a prototype model for other districts to use. These outcomes span a 10-year period.

The goals of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Project are in place; objectives to coordinate and establish minority recruiting and training have been determined and procedures for identifying minorities who may qualify as participants are being executed.

The initial phase of the project has been completed with successful results.

Professional Development Institute

A recent development has been the cooperative effort between UCF and Orange County in a Professional Development Institute. The district director for this program is a UCF doctoral student. The plan is to provide on-site employer assistance in the form of peer coaching for teachers with no district management personnel involvement. Task force membership for this effort consists of both UCF and district personnel. Efforts will begin in 1990 with a budget of over $200,000.

UCF is one of four universities to receive a Danforth Grant this year for the development of innovative programs of principal preparation. The program will begin in the Summer 1990 with 15 to 20 leadership candidates collaboratively selected with the school districts of central Florida.

Principal Scholars Institute

The University of Central Florida and the Management Training Institute have hosted, for two consecutive years, a Principal Scholars Institute. The Institute was established in 1988 to promote the professional growth and development of educational leaders in central Florida through study, research and dialogue. To date, over 200 persons have attended the conferences held in the College of Education.

Format for the Institute has included four consecutive days of presentations by nationally visible lecturers, researchers and

educators. Time is also provided for UCF faculty to meet with building principals to discuss current issues of concern, and share their respective opinions and recommendations.

Evaluations by participants indicate that the Principal Scholars Institute is one of the most valuable recent experiences for professional growth. The third annual Institute is scheduled for June 1990.

Summary

A successful school district-university partnership must recognize both the possible areas and functions appropriate for collaboration and the support systems required to maintain an on-going linkage. The successful partnership described in this paper between the central Florida public schools and the University of Central Florida has recognized these considerations, and continues to maintain a close cooperative relationship. For institutions to continue a harmonious partnership, the benefits which can accrue to each member must be clear. In the system described herein, each party is a stake holder and a benefactor. But the real winners are the students--both students of the district and the university. They should be the winners along with the community which the institutions served. As long as this is the case, the partnership will continue to be a success.

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